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NATURAL DISASTER STRIKES



What the
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Can Do---

WHEN NATURAL DISASTER STRIKES



Tornadoes, earthquakes, floods, and many other natural disasters may strike without warning. It is important for you to know how and where to get emergency help. This leaflet explains how the U.S. Department of Agriculture can help you.

The Department can:

- Provide emergency food to victims of natural disaster from stocks already available in the States.
- Assist farmers whose crops have been destroyed or damaged, or whose livestock have been left without feed.
- Extend emergency loans and otherwise aid farmers whose property has been damaged or destroyed.
- Help restore and conserve disaster-stricken land and water resources.
- Battle forest fires and take other emergency actions in the national forests.
- Make payments for losses suffered on federally insured crops.
- Donate grain for starving wildlife.

Assistance operations can be started when an area has been declared eligible for disaster relief by the President or the Secretary of Agriculture, or on the initiative of the Office of Emergency Planning.

USDA field personnel gather information on the extent of damage and kind of assistance needed and relay the information to Washington.

USDA Help in Case of—

SEVERE WINDSTORMS OR FLOODS

When hurricanes, tornadoes, or hailstorms strike, or floods overrun the land, the Department of Agriculture can:

- Provide food from Consumer and Marketing Service donated supplies for emergency group feeding to assist the homeless, evacuees, or others affected by the disaster.

- Arrange Farmers Home Administration credit to eligible disaster-stricken farmers for operating expenses, replacing lost or destroyed livestock, and repairing or replacing damaged or destroyed buildings and farm equipment.

- Donate Government-owned feed grain for starving livestock through the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service.

- Sell Government-owned feed grain at reduced prices, through ASCS, to needy livestockmen unable to pay market prices.

- Permit, through ASCS, grazing or haying on land otherwise retired from crop production under Department programs.

- Approve ACP (Agricultural Conservation Program) cost sharing for authorized soil and water emergency conservation practices.

- Give practical advice on necessary repairs and on cleaning up after storm damage.

- Make emergency loans and provide other assistance, through the Rural Electrification Administration, for repair and replacement of damaged rural electric or telephone facilities. In nearly all States, electric cooperatives have well-established plans whereby they assist a system hit by disaster.

- Make Federal Crop Insurance indemnity payments on insured crops damaged or destroyed by storms.

- Allow credit after hailstorms, through FHA, for reseeding land.

- Give assistance after floods, through the Soil Conservation Service, in planning and carrying out measures for flood prevention, erosion control, and drainage. SCS can also help with reclamation of land overlaid by sand and other flood debris.

The educational program of Cooperative Extension Service agents and specialists help people understand the danger of possible disasters, make plans to minimize danger and loss, and provide technical information after a disaster on problems involved in getting back to normal.

DROUGHT

As drought conditions develop, the Department helps first with credit and grazing assistance.

If conditions grow worse, special feed programs may be authorized.

The Department, through ASCS county offices, can grant permission to harvest hay or graze cattle on land retired by Department programs.

ASCS county offices may be authorized to sell CCC-owned grains at reduced prices.

ACP can give help by cost sharing in restoring pastures.

FHA can arrange emergency loans to farmers whose needs cannot be met locally.

FCIC can make indemnity payments on insured crops damaged or destroyed by drought.

C&MS can seek freight rate reduction for moving hay or feed into an area or livestock to other pasture or forage.

Farmworkers and others whose income is seriously reduced may become eligible for family food donations or the food stamp program, where these activities are operating through local welfare agencies.

RURAL FIRES

When fires break out in or near National Forests, the Forest Service provides leadership in fire control or helps local fire units.

After a fire, ASCS, SCS, and FS assist with flood control on burned areas by planting trees, seeding grass, and building reservoirs.

EARTHQUAKES

After earthquake disasters the Department can provide emergency food for group feeding to assist the homeless, evacuees, and others.

It can arrange FHA emergency loans to disaster-stricken farmers for operating expenses, replacing lost or destroyed livestock, repairing or replacing damaged or destroyed buildings and farm equipment.

It can donate Government-owned feed grain through ASCS for stranded livestock.

It can sell Government-owned feed grain at reduced prices through ASCS to needy livestockmen unable to pay market prices.

PRESIDENTIAL DECLARATION OF DISASTER

State and local agencies have primary responsibility for disaster relief. They are expected to use their own resources, facilities, and funds to the maximum extent.

Under the Federal Disaster Act, however, the President can bring all the resources of the Federal Government to bear in a disaster situation by declaring a major disaster. He can use emergency funds provided for this purpose.

If the stricken area warrants it, the Governor of a State asks the President for a declaration under the major disaster law. If the President finds that the situation calls for emergency action, he issues a declaration to that effect.

The Governor certifies to the Department and agency heads the need for certain types of aid, such as the sale of livestock feed at reduced prices in specific counties and donation of livestock feed in others. Emergency aid funds are provided to State and local government units who work with the affected individuals. These funds do not go directly to individuals.

CIVIL DEFENSE

Disaster relief operations of USDA serve to train officials who will be responsible for similar work in a nuclear attack. Many services needed as a result of sudden natural disasters are much the same as those which would be needed in the event of enemy attack.

Where possible, an official charged with a specific defense task is responsible for the corresponding function in a natural disaster. The Department's disaster assistance is coordinated under the Secretary's assistant for defense mobilization.

STEPS YOU TAKE TO GET USDA HELP

Food. During disasters, USDA, through State and local agencies, releases food to disaster relief organizations. Schools cooperate with USDA, State agencies, and relief organizations by making their lunchrooms available for mass care. Besides food stored for needy families, USDA releases food held for the School Lunch Program.

To obtain this help, contact your local school lunch or welfare offices authorized to release USDA-donated foods, local civil defense, American Red Cross, or Salvation Army.

Credit. The Farmers Home Administration can make 3 percent emergency loans in authorized areas when needs cannot be met locally. Local FHA offices recommend to the State Director who recommends to the national office.

To obtain this help, contact your nearest field office of FHA. It is usually located in the county seat. If not, any USDA local office can direct you to the proper location.

(Note: Federal Crop Insurance policies are good collateral for crop loans from banks, Production Credit Associations, FHA, and other lenders.)

Feed and Forage. In disaster areas designated by the Secretary, emergency assistance may include either or both of the following:

1. Sale of Government-owned feed grains at reduced prices to approved livestockmen.
2. Seasonal grazing and haying on retired or diverted cropland with a reduction in diversion payments, or for a short period at no reduction in payment following a sudden disaster such as a tidal wave or severe flood.

When the President declares a "major disaster" area, Government-owned feed grains may be donated to prevent death of livestock.

To obtain such help, contact your local ASCS office. It is usually located in the county seat.

ACP Emergency Cost Sharing. The Government can share emergency conservation costs to rehabilitate damaged farmland. The Secretary designates counties for cost-sharing assistance.

To obtain this help, contact your local ASCS office, usually located in the county seat.

Soil Conservation. The Soil Conservation Service can give technical help and, in the Great Plains Conservation Program areas, it can also offer financial aid. It can help plan and carry out flood prevention projects. During flood emergencies its engineers can supervise the construction of levees, bridges, and dikes.

To obtain this help, contact your local Soil Conservation District or area, or State office of SCS.

Forest Disasters. The Forest Service can help suppress fires, conduct rescue operations, prevent and/or remove avalanche debris; assist in flood, hurricane, and earthquake emergencies; mobilize its communications system for rapid action; and take other actions in or near National Forests or elsewhere as directed by the President.

To obtain this help, contact your nearest District Ranger, Forest Supervisor, or Regional Forester.

Diseases and Insects. The Agricultural Research Service has veterinarians, plant pathologists, and entomologists skilled at crop and livestock protection.

To obtain their help, contact your practicing veterinarian, State or Federal veterinarian, or county extension agent who will arrange for needed assistance.

Insect Damage. Federal Crop Insurance protects against loss from insect damage to the extent of the crop production costs. Insurance must be applied for before planting in counties where it is available.

To obtain this help, contact your nearest FCIC representative or the Crop Insurance State Director for your State. Any USDA local office can direct you to the proper location.

Information. The Cooperative Extension Service can advise on cleaning up damaged property, on sanitary measures, on water supply and sewage disposal, insect infestation, feed and water for livestock, substitute planting for damaged crops, grain storage, and other disaster problems.

To obtain this help, contact your county agricultural agent, home economics agent, or the director of extension at the State land-grant university or college.

PRECAUTIONS AGAINST NATURAL DISASTERS

Precautions can be taken against natural disasters.

Food

Proper preparations for natural disasters should include the stocking of foods for emergency use. States maintaining warehouses to store foods for food assistance programs are insuring against a lack of food during disasters.

Insurance

Carry machinery, building, and crop insurance (hail and all-risk).

Disease Control

Report outbreaks of unusual plant and animal diseases to your county agent or veterinarian so that action can be taken to prevent such diseases from spreading.

Flood Control

When floods threaten, strengthen embankments and levees, open drains and ditches, brace buildings, protect wells by sandbagging. As necessary, move household goods, feed supplies, and machinery to higher ground or upper stories of substantial buildings.

Drought

Develop sources of emergency water for community and agricultural needs such as larger farm ponds or sediment pools at floodwater structures in upstream projects.

Fire Control

Have an emergency plan for action in event of fire. Post fire-warning notices around woodlands. Remove dead trees and branches regularly. Discuss woods-fire problem with your local forest fire warden or State forester.

EXAMPLES OF HELP GIVEN

In anticipation of spring floods, emergency relief organizations, USDA, State and local officials, went into cooperative action to stockpile foods in early 1969 for the Midwest. USDA foods were stored in 17 areas in preparation for impending floods. When the floods came, food was there for

victims and flood workers. In Cherokee, Iowa, the Red Cross used USDA-donated foods to feed 65 evacuated families. When Minot, N. Dak., was flooded, the Salvation Army conducted mass feeding operations. In advance, 200,000 pounds of food had been stored. In a month, 19,557 pounds were distributed, 2,449 persons were fed, while 656 persons received food for home use.

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Tornadoes strike in isolated areas throughout the country damaging buildings, spreading debris, and injuring or killing people and livestock. Many buildings containing hay, grain, mixed feeds and ensilage are destroyed or damaged.

When the Governor certifies the need, USDA can authorize temporary grazing of land previously withdrawn from production under USDA programs, a short-term feed grain donation program, or a livestock feed program under which sales of CCC-owned grain could be made to eligible farmers at reduced prices. The Secretary of Agriculture approves the requests for all three programs.

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During January and February 1969, record rainfall in California flooded some of our most productive farmlands. By mid-April \$4 million had been allocated for use in 17 counties to farmers for emergency conservation work to restore their lands to productive capacity. Because ACP help was available as soon as the water subsided, some farmers got crops in during 1969 on farmlands which had been damaged by floods.

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In the summer of 1967 a forest fire burned 56,000 acres of land near Bonners Ferry, Idaho. Fanned by winds that advanced it 21 miles in one day, it destroyed valuable community resources. The Forest Service and affected landowners rushed to reseed and repair the burned area ahead of fall rains to prevent soil loss and possible floods. By November, grass and tree seed had been aerially sown, trees planted, streams cleaned, and drainage structures repaired. Relatively clear streams in the spring of 1968 attested to the project's success.

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In 1968, disastrous weather conditions severely damaged or destroyed millions of dollars of cotton crops from Texas to South Carolina and Georgia. For some States, this was the third or fourth straight year of cotton crop losses. Farmers with Federal Crop Insurance were able to get back their production costs.

Washington, D.C.

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